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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6361
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4160
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2751
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7345
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1370
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,
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CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Europe, Syria/Lebanon,
Congressional elections, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Iraq
(11/7)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers today reported President Asad's meeting on November 6 with Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store, focusing on Syrian-European relations, general developments and a potential European role in the Middle East peace process. Headlines featured a joint press conference held by FM Mouallem and the visiting Norwegian FM, who described his talks with President Asad as "candid, direct, and useful."

On Syrian-Lebanese relations, papers reported the visit to Damascus by Ali Qanso, Chairman of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Lebanon, and his meeting with Vice President Farouk al-Shara. In a statement following the meeting, Mr. Qanso praised Syria's keenness for the achievement of national accord among the Lebanese.

Papers also reported that German weekly magazine Der Spiegel recently revealed a new misunderstanding between Germany and Israel after Israeli Justice Minister Meir Sheetrit failed to present to a German delegation last week proof of his accusations that Syria smuggled arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses current developments in the region, Syrian-European relations and the European role in the Middle East peace process with the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Ghar Store.

Minister Store: Syria has pivotal role in achieving security and stability. Talks with President Asad were frank and fruitful.

Foreign Minister Al-Mouallem: US accusations against Syria reflect failure of Washington's policy in the region.... We hope that next year will witness launch of the Middle East peace process"

(Government-owned Tishreen, 11/7)

"Vice President Shara discusses recent developments in Lebanon with Ali Qanso, Chairman of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Lebanon. Qanso reiterates importance of national unity to serve Lebanon's Arab identity.... We all know Syria's sacrifices to realize stability in Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 11/7)

"The second round of Lebanese consultations will be held today.

Berri calls for halting media campaigns. President Lahoud: Everyone is invited to adopt national discourse instead of seeking support from abroad. Olmert demands a meeting with Lebanese PM Al-Saniora" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/7)

"Der Spiegel: Israeli statements about smuggling arms to Lebanon from Syria are mere lies" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/7)
"The Israeli aggression against Gaza Strip enters its sixth day. A new Israeli massacre against Palestinian students in Beit Hanoun: The death toll rises to 53. A Palestinian woman carries out martyrdom operation amidst a crowd of occupation soldiers" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/7)
"The US Congressional elections will commence today. The Saddam death sentence narrows the margin between Democrats and Republicans" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/7)

¶3. Editorial Block Quotes:

"The Key to Peace and Stability"

Muhammad Khayr al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawrah, wrote (11/07): "There is growing talk by European officials and some Americans about the regional importance of Syria and the need to talk with it.... This interest in Syria sends several messages. The first is that Europe is in the process of revising its policy after studying the bad American experience in the region and drawing the necessary conclusions. The second message entails implicit criticism of the policy of marginalization and isolation that the administration of the neoconservatives, led by President Bush, has pursued against Syria...., a policy that has resulted in demolishing the basis of regional stability...." "The new positions toward Syria also show its strategic status in the Middle East and the pressing need for Damascus in the effort to entrench security and stability in the region...." "Syria's importance lies in two things: Its geo-strategic location in the heart of the region and its sound policy toward events and their future results.... Syria is an influential country by virtue of its location, and it is a country that has not erred in its reading of events and the way they have developed, because it relies

on rich experience in analyzing events, foreseeing the future, giving advice, and warning against foolish and adventurous policies. Syria has had views on all developments in the region and the mistaken interventionist policies in it, and it has never been proven wrong in its views on any event, big or small. "The Bush administration's bet on the possibility of isolating Syria, marginalizing it, and canceling its role from the region's political map has been a 100 percent failure."

"Will Baker Repair What Bush Has Spoiled?"

Dr. Khalaf al-Jarrad, Chief Editor of government-owned Tishreen, wrote (11/07): "What makes the mission of James Baker's commission on Iraq important is Baker's experience in the region, the bipartisan support for his work, the growing American failure in Iraq and the need to extricate the United States from this serious impasse...."

"The world will soon know if Baker will really offer a lifeline to President Bush or if his recommendations will fail to correct what has been spoiled by the policy of blind brute force and the logic of hegemony and imposition of the colonial will on peoples and societies with civilizations that extend back thousands of years. These peoples and societies have long historical experience in defeating invaders and aggressors, smashing their tyranny, and inflicting shame and disgrace on them, for the sake of dignity, honor, and freedom, irrespective of the huge sacrifices and the heavy cost of resistance...."

"Isolation"

As'ad Abbud, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (11/07): "The US policy of isolating other countries has often proven a failure, despite the negative influence of the policy on the countries isolated, such as China, Cuba, North Korea, and Iran...."

"The United States today boasts that it is trying to isolate Syria, and it loudly warns other countries against helping Syria come out of its isolation...."

"I do not say that this policy of pressure and isolation has not harmed our programs and our efforts to implement reform and move

forward. But despite this, we are succeeding in resisting these attempts. The signs of success are seen in many places, from Europe, where many figures have warned against the seriousness of isolating Syria -- and we see an example of this even in the United States itself -- to Damascus, where as soon as one international conference ends a new international or regional conference begins....

"The policy of pressure and isolation against Syria has failed entirely.... Dialogue is the only option."

"Where Are You Arabs?"

Dr. Buthaynah Sha'ban, Minister for Expatriate Affairs, commented in government-owned Tishreen (11/7): "Israel's actions against the Palestinians constitute real genocide.... Arab rulers, especially Washington's allies, continue to be silent and motionless....

"President Bush openly stated that what concerns him in the Middle East is oil and commitment to Israel and other allies.... How can an Arab be an ally to the United States in its absolute support for Israel and at the same time respond to the cries of mothers and children in Palestine, Iraq, and recently in Lebanon, who were the victims of Israeli and American crimes committed within an organized genocidal war to fragment the Arabs, sow divisions among them, and push them toward sectarian and civil fighting....?"

Corbin